

## A distorted history

I am writing in response to the news item (July 09, 2008) and editorial (July 10, 2008) published in the daily *Dawn*, Karachi on the distorted history of Pakistan. Based on the bold contents of both items, it seems that there is finally an increasing awareness of the fact that the nation's history remains incomplete. While the news item and editorial are an encouraging sign of this awareness – at least for those who have been working to fix Pakistan's history - the two pieces could have elaborated further on the actual nature of the distortion.

The question is not only *whether* history has been distorted, but also *how* it has been distorted. More specifically, historians have failed to adequately cover: (1) the nationalists' reasons for opposing the partition of India and (2) their painstaking struggle to liberate the nation from British rule. Based on what has been published thus far, the role of parties such as the Khaksar Tehrik, Ahrars, Khudai Khidmatgars, Momins, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind has been completely overlooked, while the status of the All-India Muslim League has been continuously promoted and elevated. Honest analysis of why leaders like Allama Mashriqi (founder of the Khaksar Tehrik) were opposed to partition, as well as a study of their role in bringing freedom to British India, is critical to achieving an understanding of how the nation has arrived at its present, worrisome state.

Another point is that while historians of the Indian subcontinent have certainly played a role in the distortion of history, the problem goes beyond this group alone. For instance, most foreign historians focusing on India/Pakistan have presented an unbalanced view of the region's history as well. Furthermore, book publishers and scholarly journals have thus far failed to print any substantial, unbiased works on parties beyond the All-India Muslim League. While foreign sources may have their own motives, in Pakistan the reason seems to be owing to the establishment and ruling class, who dictate the role of educationists and research institutes. It is time they recognized that a balanced analysis of the division of British India cannot be presented without discussing all parties' perspectives on the partition episode.

Ultimately, the root cause of the prevailing situation seems to be the lack of emphasis on independent thinking and analysis in Pakistan. As a result, most of us, including intellectuals, have developed "tunnel vision" and are unwilling or unable to consider differing points of view. This suppression and intolerance of independent thinking is extremely dangerous, and must be stopped if Pakistan is to right its history and move forward. We must keep in mind that history is not simply a record of events, but rather an opportunity to learn from past mistakes, in order to steer the nation towards a better future.

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The above letter dated July 14, 2008 to the editor of *Dawn* (Karachi, Pakistan) was published, with minor amendment, in *Dawn* (Karachi) on June 17, 2008  
<http://dawn.com/2008/07/17/letted.htm#1>

Editorial in *Dawn* (Karachi) dated June 10, 2008  
<http://dawn.com/2008/07/10/ed.htm#2>